

Support for HB 117

My name is Thom Wischer and my family has been set netting on the west side of Kodiak Island since 1976. We currently have three permit holders in the family, myself and my two adult children. We fish three to five nets in any given season.

As a family operation, all the fish from each net are placed in iced totes in one or two holding skiffs depending on the volume of the harvest. This has been the practice since set netting began on Kodiak. We have never attempted to determine the number of fish each permit holder has caught. All permit holders are present for the length of the season and when deliveries are made, whoever is in the skiff signs the fish ticket. It has always been done this way. HB 117 is not asking for anything new, just to be allowed to do what we always have. There has never been any issue with this practice from the Alaska State Troopers or with ADF&G.

If we are forced to separately hold fish caught by each permit holder's net and that permit holder must deliver only their fish each day creates an impossible situation for any family fishing operation. It would mean that each permit holder in a family cooperative fishery would need their own skiff to pick fish and their own holding skiff to deliver, which would be cost prohibitive.

Many permit holders in a family fishery have primary duties on shore to support the operation. These individuals can be young children, elderly, or even pregnant. Forcing them to get in a skiff multiple times a day to deliver and sign a fish ticket in Kodiak weather puts their safety at risk and increases the time required at a tender which will affect the quality of the fish.

I would like to thank all of you that have worked to find a solution to this problem and allow the family gill net fishery in Kodiak to remain viable as it has been for so many years.

Regards,

Thom Wischer